



**Department of Public Instruction**  
600 E Boulevard Ave., Dept. 201, Bismarck, ND 58505-0440  
(701) 328-2260 Fax - (701) 328-2461

**Kirsten Baesler**  
State Superintendent

**Robert J. Christman**  
Deputy Superintendent

[www.nd.gov/dpi](http://www.nd.gov/dpi)

***For Immediate Release***

Monday, Jan. 4, 2016  
Contact: Dale Wetzel, Public Information Specialist  
Office 701-328-2247  
Cell: 701-400-8557  
Email: [dewetzel@nd.gov](mailto:dewetzel@nd.gov)

## **Baesler: More than 200 Teacher Positions Unfilled**

**BISMARCK, N.D., Jan. 4, 2016** – North Dakota School Superintendent Kirsten Baesler said 204 teacher openings remain unfilled during the current school year, an illustration of the seriousness of the state's teacher shortage.

Thirty-five career and technical education teaching jobs are still vacant, according to the most recent data on teaching jobs. The data show 32 openings in social-studies teaching positions, 28 vacancies in special education, and 20 open positions in business education.

In eight course areas, the number of unfilled teaching positions equals 5 percent or more of the total number of public-school teaching jobs in that area, Baesler said.

North Dakota schools have also been hiring retired teachers and administrators to fill openings. During the 2014-15 school year, 314 teachers and administrators were drawn from the ranks of retired North Dakota educators, according to data gathered by the Teachers' Fund for Retirement, which is the main pension fund for North Dakota public school teachers.

Of the 314 retired educators, 268 took jobs as teachers, 24 worked as school superintendents and 22 others held administrative jobs, the retirement agency's data say. Forty-six retired educators worked in special education positions.

Baesler has taken a lead role in trying to address the problem. The superintendent assembled a task force to explore potential solutions; the group includes representatives of North Dakota United, the state School Boards Association, the state Council of Educational Leaders and the Education Standards and Practices Board, which is the North Dakota agency that licenses public school teachers.

She has asked North Dakota's University System to endorse offering a Master's of Arts in Teaching degree. The MAT degree would make it possible for mid-career professionals who already have a bachelor's degree to obtain the academic credentials they need to be licensed as teachers, through graduate-level coursework.

The Board of Higher Education has approved allowing Valley City State University, Mayville State University and Dickinson State University to offer MAT degrees as part of their course offerings. The three schools are still awaiting approval from the Higher Learning Commission, an accrediting agency based in Chicago.

The task force is taking steps to market the teaching profession to North Dakota's young people as an attractive career option, including advertising the profession and developing a central website of job opportunities.

###